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ABSTRACT

This guide suggests that the responsibility of teachers is to provide rigorous academic instruction that will lead to improved performance on the Scholastic Assessment Test I (SAT I). Content-area literacy is especially important for the verbal section of the SAT I, and it suggested that all teachers should infuse reading and writing instruction into their disciplines. This booklet helps teachers prepare students for the SAT I. The first section focuses on practices for rigorous academic instruction including prereading strategies, strategies during reading, and after reading strategies. The second section concentrates on reading comprehension strategies in preparing students for the verbal section of SAT I. These include: (1) identifying specific details; (2) identifying main ideas; (3) summarizing information; (4) figuring out the meaning of words from context; (5) drawing conclusions/making inferences; (6) developing analogies; (7) comparing two different passages; and (8) extended reasoning. A final reminder to teachers stresses the importance of student reading and writing. (Contains six references.) (SLD)

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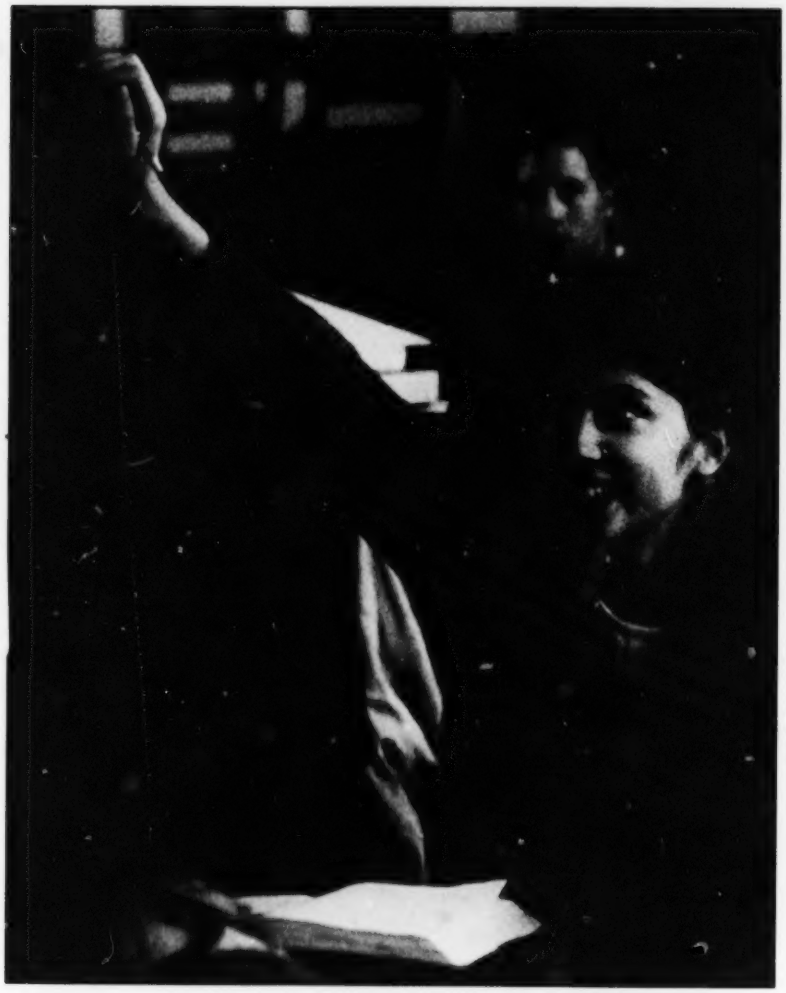

Ways to Boost Verbal Scores

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Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education • Department of Public Instruction
Instructional Services • English Language Arts, 1998

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For Teachers: Practices for Rigorous, Academic Instruction

It is the responsibility of all teachers to provide rigorous, academic instruction that will lead to improved student achievement on the SAT I. Content-area literacy is especially important for the Verbal Section of the SAT I, and all teachers should be careful to infuse reading and writing instruction and practice into their disciplines. In addition, the following practices will insure strong academic achievement:

1. Make sure you are teaching and testing the goals and objectives of the *Standard Course of Study*.
2. Pay particular attention to how students learn to reason, to think critically, in your discipline. Model good reasoning for them; let them hear other students reason out problems; provide time for self, peer, and teacher critique of reasoning.
3. Be aware of the skills and competencies which the SAT I assesses. Ask the school counselor for a sample test if you are unfamiliar with the SAT I.
4. Collect and share with colleagues good reading passages and appropriate questions. Consider establishing a school-wide data base of these questions. For example, find reading material that is appropriate for students and write sentence completion questions or analogies such as those on page 9.
5. Teach students how to ask probing questions and require that they generate questions about the text they read.
6. Be sensitive to issues of race and gender equity. Monitor your own patterns of interaction with your students and/or videotape your class and look for patterns. As a faculty, analyze your school's disaggregated test data and enrollment in advanced classes. Ask pertinent questions about what is happening in course selections and student achievement and why these patterns are occurring.
7. Develop and distribute to students and parents a list of challenging reading and viewing materials. As much as possible, use supplemental reading materials and primary sources instead of just textbooks.
8. Instruct your students in reading strategies—especially prereading, during reading, after reading strategies. The following list may be helpful for students:

Prereading Strategies

- set or identify purpose
- use background knowledge
- preview by skimming, looking at titles, subtitles, pictures, charts, sections of text, etc.
- identify the type of selection and review the characteristics of that genre
- predict what the selection will be about
- consider the author—what did you know about him? What was his point of view?

During Reading Strategies

- find categories and large ideas
- focus and refocus attention
- monitor comprehension by identifying what you understood and what was confusing

During Reading Strategies (continued)

- anticipate and predict; check predictions
- organize and integrate information; make connections
- use context clues to figure out vocabulary
- reread to clarify confusing portions
- generate questions about the text
- clarify ideas and relationships
- visualize: What did the scene or the characters look, sound, or smell like?
- adjust reading speed and strategies according to text difficulty and characteristics
- read on, looking for patterns, information, or clarity
- make personal connections; relate text to personal experiences
- notice what you did and did not find interesting
- underline or take notes

After Reading Strategies

- talk about or write about some aspect of what you read
- check predictions
- reflect on the major ideas of the text
- seek additional information from outside sources
- summarize to check comprehension
- reread parts
- reflect on the effectiveness of your reading strategies
- evaluate the text

9. Guide students into reading assignments with good instructional practices such as **preteaching necessary vocabulary**, discussing the organizational devices the author will be using, or suggesting ideas/patterns they should look for while reading.

10. Help students to learn from their mistakes. For example, lead students through an "error analysis" of their tests or essays; give tests that are cumulative and reflect the recursive nature of learning; ask students to write an analysis of the mistakes they made on a test and how they will avoid the same mistakes in the future.

11. Analyze your school's or your students' PSAT data to find areas of weaknesses for which students need more instructional time.

12. Keep sample SAT test questions available for "sponge" activities, when you have a few minutes at the end of the class. Or, during the first few minutes of the class when you have to take care of necessary administrative duties, give a few sample questions for focus and review.

13. Use a format similar to that of the SAT on at least some of your tests—for example, include some analogies, multiple choice reading comprehension questions, etc.

14. Model good critical thinking, curiosity and the propensity to be a life-long learner. Discuss with your students the books and articles you are reading, as well as the classes you are taking.

15. Help students to focus on the process of thinking and learning in your discipline, rather than merely memorizing the factual information.

Reading Comprehension Strategies: Preparing Students for the Verbal Section of the SAT I

The following reading comprehension strategies are organized by the comprehension skills which are assessed by the SAT I Verbal Section. Preparing for the SAT I Verbal Section should not be the responsibility of only the English teachers. Students need to read and write in all subject areas for the rigorous, academic foundation they need for college preparation. Teachers in all disciplines should give instruction and practice in at least some of the following strategies.

Identifying Specific Details

1. Use the **Q**uestion-**A**nswer-**D**etail (QAD) strategy to organize information after reading.

   Question: Who, What, Where, When, How, or Why
   Answer: In the students' own words
   Detail: Reference the passage to extend, explain, define, or clarify

2. Use the **Q**uestion-**A**nswer-**R**elationship (QAR) strategy to organize information by asking and answering four levels of questions after reading (Raphael, 1984).

   - The first questions to ask and answer are RIGHT THERE questions. The answer to this level of question is explicitly in the text so that the reader can point directly to it—"right there."
   - The second level of question, THINK AND SEARCH, requires a synthesis of information from the text. The reader must use passages from the text to draw conclusions.
   - The third level of question is ON MY OWN. This represents a question which asks the reader to call on prior information; the answer is "in the reader's head" rather than "in the text."
   - The fourth level of question, THE WRITER AND ME, requires interpretation. The reader must read and understand the text and then put information together with his or her background knowledge to reason out an interpretation. This level is called "the writer and me" because it involves information from both the writer and the reader.

3. Use the PQ4R strategy:

   - **P**review: Preparatory experiences to promote comprehension—read the title, introductory statements, subtitles, captions, and summary statements.
   - **Q**uestions: Convert each boldface heading or subtitle to a question.
   - **R**ead the selection.
   - **R**eflect: Think about the material you have just read.
   - **R**ecite: answer the questions you generated in the second step.
   - **R**eview.

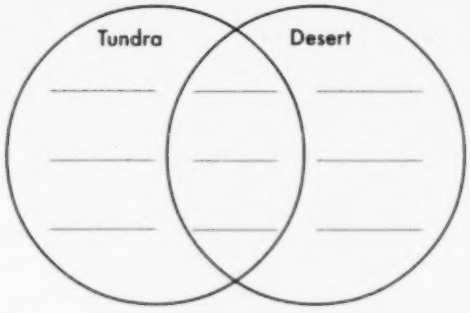
4. Use the following strategies to find specific details:

   - Generate questions about the text, looking for main ideas and relationships.
   - Reread earlier material (backtrack).
   - Periodically restate or paraphrase what you have read, focusing on details that support main ideas.

Identifying the Main idea

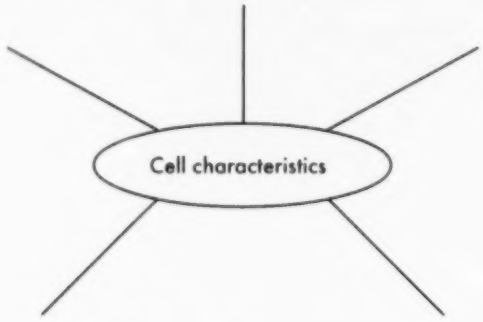
1. Provide a guided reading experience to help students identify the main idea by providing a graphic or map that is partially completed. Some examples,

   "The chapter you will read tonight compares and contrasts the characteristics of tundra and desert. Read carefully, looking for the major likenesses and differences, and fill in this graphic."



McTighe (1986)

   " The chapter you will read describes the characteristics of a cell. Read carefully, looking for the major characteristics or attributes of a cell, and fill in this graphic."



2. Use a chart to list or classify information

   Example: Use the following chart and list the main ideas about how amphibian and reptiles are different after you have read the selection entitled "Amphibians and Reptiles"

	Amphibians	*Reptiles*
Habitat		
Changing form		
Skin		

The following chart comes from Jean Schmidt at Union Pines High School, who uses a blank chart to ask students to discuss the work and the values of Native Americans and Puritans in the 1600's. Below is a chart derived from the responses of one class (from *NCETA Notes*, Spring, 1997):

Foundations of Society	Native American Values (1600's)	Puritan Values (1600's)
Environment	People are one with the land and animals. They live in harmony with nature. They use only what they need.	People are superior to the land; they are masters. Nature (esp. the forest) and natural impulses are evil. People possess the land and value ownership.
Religion	Religion & state are the same. God is nature, animal, male, and female. Harmony with nature is physical and spiritual at the same time. Dead often regarded as present in spirit.	The church governs as a supreme authority with the right to punish. God is a white male. Some are predestined to go to heaven; some are not. Heaven is ultimate escape from sinful earth and flesh.
Education	Elders and nature are the most valued teachers. People learn best when they are open to experience.	Education for boys is valued (not for girls). Institutions of church, such as Harvard University, are the best educators.
Economy	Sharing is the basic economic act (wealth is lost but land is forever). Produce for need, not for profit.	Competition for profits is the basic economic act. Material possessions and land ownership are highly valued. Inheritance is important.

Summarizing Information

1. After reading a piece of text, summarize by:
   - Scanning the text.
   - Determining the main ideas/less important ideas.
   - Synthesizing ideas.
   - Creating new text using your own words.

2. Anne Chapman (1995) recommends the following steps in summarizing:
   - Identify the overall meaning or main ideas of the text, keeping in mind that it may not be explicitly stated, requiring you to infer the meaning from information in the text.
   - Be able to express in your own words other important ideas even though these too may not be explicit, again requiring inference.
   - Evaluate the ideas in the text for their relevance and importance to the overall meaning.
   - Don't just assume that sentences at the start of paragraphs, which usually introduce the topic or thesis, necessarily contain information relevant to a summary.
   - Remember that the development of a concept or a main point may take several sentences, paragraphs, or even pages.
   - Reorganize the information into a structure that preserves the relationship of the ideas to each other, but does not necessarily follow the sequence of the original text.
   - Produce a summary that presents the important information succinctly and coherently in your own words.
3. Practice giving a new title which represents the main idea of the piece of text you have just read. Be ready to explain and justify your ideas.
4. Explain how the diagrams, charts, and/or drawings illustrate a main idea which the author wanted to draw the reader's attention to.
5. Underline or make notes on the part of the text that seem most important on a quick reading. Then review those ideas, reread to get an understanding of the overall text. Check your initial impressions as you reread.
6. Use Reciprocal Teaching to help readers summarize and predict:
   1. Summarize the paragraph or assignment in a sentence.
   2. Ask a high level question or two.
   3. Clarify the difficult parts.
   4. Predict what the next paragraph or segment will discuss.

   Initially, the teacher must model this process for students, gradually allowing students to engage in the process with constructive feedback. (Palinscar, 1986)

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Figuring Out the Meaning of Words from Context

1. Use the Strategic Word Attack (SWAT) to figure out unknown words:
   - Read to the end of the sentence.
   - Reread and look at pictures/graphs/diagrams.
   - Consider what word (especially any word that has the same prefix, suffix, or root) would make sense.
   - Examine any clues in the sentence that this would be a good substitution.
   - Read on to the end of the sentence.
2. Use the following questions to examine the word:

   Can I break the word into prefix, root, suffix? Is so, what is the meaning of that part of the word? Can I think of similar words whose meaning I know?

   What part of speech is this word—noun, adjective, adverb, etc.? Will that information help me figure out what the word means?

   Are there any context clues, either in the sentence or in the paragraph?

Drawing Conclusions/Making Inferences

1. Use a Monitoring Guide to structure student discussions and writing about the literature being studied:

   Question: What do the title and the first sentence of each paragraph suggest that this purpose is about?

   Purpose: Discussion of this question provides a mental "set" for reading and may reveal students' prior knowledge about the content of the passage.

   Question: What part of the passage seems most informative, interesting, or real?

   Purpose: Students are encouraged to relate the ideas, people, places and/or events to those in their own lives.

   Question: Which words does the author use in an effective or unique way?

   Purpose: This question calls the students' attention to command of language and appropriate word choice.

   Question: What technique does the author employ that you could use in your own writing?

   Purpose: In considering this question, students will come to see text as another author's writing and writing as a craft that they, too, can learn.

2. Ask questions, both oral and written, that ask students to engage in critical thinking. The following chart provides good examples:

ORGANIZING: ARRANGING INFORMATION SO IT CAN BE USED EFFECTIVELY

- Categorize _____ according to _____.
- Compare _____ to _____.
- Classify _____ according to _____.

ANALYZING: CLARIFYING INFORMATION BY EXAMINING RELATIONSHIPS

- What are the components, parts, or features of _____.
- Outline, web, or diagram _____.
- What patterns or relationships do you see?
- What are the main ideas?

APPLYING: USING INFORMATION FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES

- How is _____ related to _____?
- How is _____ an example of _____?
- How and why would you use this principle or theory?

GENERATING: PRODUCING NEW INFORMATION, MEANING, OR IDEAS

- Draw a conclusion about _____.
- Predict _____.
- Explain or elaborate _____.

INTEGRATING: CONNECTING AND COMBINING INFORMATION

- What generalizations can you make?
- Summarize _____.
- What are related conclusions you might draw?

EVALUATING: ASSESSING THE REASONABLENESS AND QUALITY OF IDEAS

- What criteria would you use to make a judgment?
- Explain why you made the judgment?

From Dimensions of Thinking(1988), Marzan, et. al.o

3. Use the acronym SOAPS to ask and answer questions about text:

   S What is the **s**ubject of the text?
   O What is the **o**ccasion? (the time, the place, the context of the writing)
   A Who is the **a**udience for whom the text was written?
   P What is the **p**urpose of the text? What was the author's purpose for writing the it?
   S Who is the **s**peaker? (not necessarily the author, but the voice who is telling the story)

Developing Analogies

1. Use the following steps to analyze analogies

   - Convert each analogy into the simplest, most precise sentence form possible:

     fish : water :: bird : air
     A fish lives in water, and a bird lives in air.

     fish : vertebrate :: worm : invertebrate
     A fish is a vertebrate, while a worm is an invertebrate.

   - Write the sentences for verification of understanding.

2. Ask students to create analogies from the content area being studied:

   _____ : nucleotide :: house : lumber
   (DNA; sugar; phosphate; nucleus)

3. Teach students the most common types of analogies:

   Lesser degree : greater degree
   smile : laugh Breath : pant cut : slash

   Word : synonym (the synonym may be a different part of speech)
   collapse : debacle liar : mendacious

   Cause : effect
   practice : improvement punch : pain

   Part : whole
   violinist : orchestra bird: flock

   General : specific
   pain killer : aspirin poem : sonnet

   Thing : quality of thing
   sandpaper : rough water : wet

   Object : use
   scissors : cut car : transportation

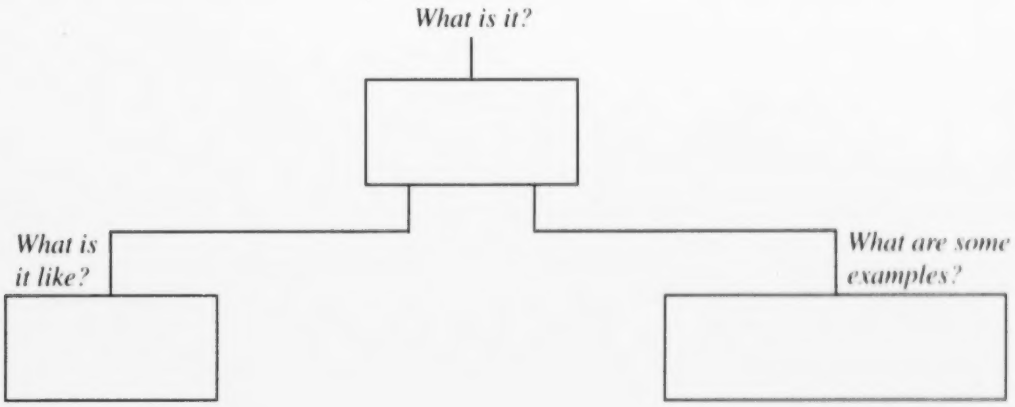
   User : tool
   sculptor : chisel photographer : camera potter : wheel

   Degree : intensity
   like : love dislike : despise

   Excessive degree
   eating : gluttony frugality : stinginess

4. Apply word mapping strategies to figure out the meaning of words:

   A word map includes three relationships essential to a definition: What is it? What is it like? What are some examples?



Comparing Two Different Passages

The SAT I Verbal Section will have selections that give the reader two passages and then ask questions about both passages. At least some of the questions will ask the reader to make a comparison or a contrast involving both passages. Swartz and Parks (1994) suggest using questions for "Open comparing and contrasting" when a broad consideration of two things is called for and questions for a "Focused comparing and contrasting" when specific similarities and differences guide thinking. Give students practice with both types of comparison/contrast questions.

Open Compare and Contrast Questions

1. How are they similar?
2. How are they different?
3. What similarities and differences seem significant?
4. What categories or patterns do you see in the significant similarities and differences?
5. What interpretation or conclusions is suggested by the significant similarities and differences?

Focused Compare and Contrast Questions

1. What kinds of similarities and differences are significant to the purpose of the comparison and contrast?
2. What similarities fall into these categories?
3. What differences fall into these categories?
4. What pattern of similarities and differences are revealed?
5. What conclusion or interpretation is suggested by the comparison and contrast that is significant to its purpose?

Extended Reasoning

1. Develop a list of criteria for evaluating a piece of text and then use criteria to substantiate judgment.

2. Geoffrey Scheurman in Anne Chapman's *Making Sense: Teaching Critical Reading Across the Disciplines* (1995) suggests teaching extended reasoning by asking students to read the lines of text literally, read between the lines, and read beyond the lines. The following activities for extended reasoning are based on the opening paragraph of the *Declaration of Independence*.

Levels of Meaning

Do the following statements agree with what the authors of the *Declaration of Independence* actually wrote? Different words may still say the same thing. Be prepared to cite evidence from the text for you decision.

Literal (reading the lines): It was necessary for the colonists to separate themselves from England.

Interpretive (reading between the lines): A group of people would never give their consent to be ruled by a despot.

Evaluative (reading beyond the lines): Duty to oneself is greater than duty to one's country.

Infer meaning from the text with concept pairs

For each set of concept pairs, use information in the *Declaration of Independence* (referencing the line) to determine why the concepts are similar. Rank order the pairs from most similar to least similar and be prepared to defend your judgment.

_____ Tyranny / Despotism

_____ Tyranny / Repeated injuries

_____ Abuses / Usurpations

_____ Abuses / Despotism

_____ Usurpations / Despotism

Sample student reasoning:

- Abuses and usurpations appear to lead to the same thing (despotism, line 22) as do repeated injuries and usurpations (tyranny, line 28).
- Usurpations, abuses, and repeated injuries are somehow the causes of tyranny and despotism.
- I conclude that tyranny and despotism are synonyms and, therefore, the most similar.

(Chapman, *Making Sense: Teaching Critical Reading Across the Disciplines*)

A Final Reminder to Teachers:

The Verbal Section of the SAT assesses students' ability to read and reason their way through text. In order to do this proficiently, students need instruction in and opportunities to practice critical reading and analysis of text in all content areas.

- Students need to read widely and deeply in diverse kinds of text.
- They need to write about and talk about the text they have been reading.
- They need to hear models of reasoning, and they need opportunities to reason out answers to questions with constructive feedback.

A strong, rigorous, academic course of study in all content areas engages students in these intellectual activities and prepares them not only for the SAT I but for lifelong learning.

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